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Promoting philanthropy

Case study: Designing philanthropy

By Cheryl Chapman



Dr Felicity von Peters, managing partner of Berlin-based Active Philanthropy (pictured right), reveals the thinking behind a soon-to-be launched playful tool box designed to help attract philanthropists, as well as support those who give to share their experience and knowledge with peers.

"The unprecedented amount of wealth which has accumulated in Europe in the last 50 years has also contributed to a growing interest in philanthropy and different ways to give back. However, the number of entrepreneurs that are active as philanthropists or donors in Europe is still a fraction of what it could potentially be: according to Cap Gemini, nearly 21,000 individuals in Europe have a net wealth of more than \$30m.

But how might we activate potential philanthropists? What do would-be donors need to embark on the journey of giving back? Can we find new ways of promoting philanthropy by assisting existing philanthropists to attract their peers into the field?

To work on these questions, Active Philanthropy approached the design and innovation consultancy IDEO. The aim was not just to attract new players into the field, but also to promote a culture of giving amongst families and individuals that emphasises the giving of time, talent, treasure and trust – i.e. helps philanthropists to contribute not just financial resources but also assets such as professional experience, contacts and passion for a cause. IDEO specialises in human-centred innovation and has catalysed culture changes in many areas across the public, private and third sectors. With the help of IDEO, the project sought to explore what tools could help potential philanthropists on their journey towards engaged philanthropy and assist them in designing a personal giving strategy. These tools should be crafted in such a way that philanthropists could use them themselves as well as with their peers.

To leverage the outcome of the project, Active Philanthropy brought on board shærpa, an organisation promoting engaged philanthropy and social venturing, backed by the Noaber Foundation in the Netherlands, and another partner from Switzerland that shared the same vision of promoting engaged philanthropy amongst entrepreneurs and their families. In a series of collaborative workshops, the partners discussed various approaches that would help to activate potential philanthropists and assist them in defining the focus and strategy of their philanthropic investments as well as provide benchmarks for the implementation of their engagement.

In a first phase, the IDEO team explored experiences and needs of the target audience from across Europe about philanthropy, regardless of whether they were just starting out on their own charitable projects or had been working in this area for years. The outcomes of these conversations were turned into prototype designs that were tested with another group of entrepreneurs and their families. Designs were crafted along a set of principles that included story-telling, a focus on the outcome and impact of investments, and tapped into both head and heart. In addition, the project focused on ways in which donors could support each other. Discussions with the target audience showed again that peer-to-peer

interactions are much in demand, and could be an approach to spread engaged philanthropy all over Europe.

The toolbox is currently being finalised by the partners; further background on the project will be available in the September issue of Alliance Magazine.

The potential impact of attracting entrepreneurs and their families to becoming engaged philanthropists is evident from the fact that most innovations in the sector in the past decade have been driven and supported by entrepreneurs directly or foundations set up by entrepreneurs – be it venture philanthropy, social entrepreneurship or calculating the SROI of an investment. The partners of the IDEO project therefore hope that the findings will help to attract a larger number of entrepreneurs and their families to the sector and leverage the potential for strategic philanthropy this audience has."

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